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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 07LIMA2400, PERU FACES A "TORNADO OF PROTESTS"

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07LIMA2400**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">07LIMA2400</a>	<a href="#">2007-07-13 16:48</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Lima</a>

Appears in these articles:

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PP RUEHWEB

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P 131648Z JUL 07  
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RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6146  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 1718  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 4872  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7458  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 0563  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 2981  
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RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1342  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 1382

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 002400

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2027  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [PE](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: PERU FACES A "TORNADO OF PROTESTS"

REF: LIMA 2319

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Peru is facing, in the words of one local commentator, a "tornado of protests," as organized labor, teachers, regional officials, and others have taken to the streets to call attention to a wide variety of grievances. Government officials and political analysts cite different causes for the unusually high-number of strikes, including the desire to share in Peru's economic growth, the lack of political legitimacy of local governments, and the influence of Bolivarian agitators. In public, the GOP has taken a businesslike approach, recognizing the public's right of free expression, but insisting law and order must be preserved. In private, senior ministers remain confident that the protests will burn out before National Day celebrations begin July 28. An analysis of the demonstrations bears out this conclusion but also suggests that the protest season may carry into August. End Summary

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A Long List of Protests  
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¶2. (C) So far this month, a variety of groups have taken to the streets to air grievances ranging from complaints over mandatory teacher testing, to corrupt local government, to subcontracting in the mining industry. The Office of the Ombudsman reported 75 ongoing conflicts in 16 of Peru's 24 provinces, with 35 of the conflicts "active." Ombudsman Beatriz Merino told the Ambassador July 9 that the number of conflicts has actually doubled over the past year. A Lima paper published a schedule that listed 11 major strikes for the week of July 8 alone.

¶3. (C) The number and variety of the demonstrations is alarming, and three persons have died in strike-related violence in the past week. A look at three of the larger strikes, however, suggests the protests may not have legs. Peru's largest labor union, the General Central of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), announced a general strike in support of workers at the Casapalca mines near Lima, and more than 5,000 protesters marched through downtown Lima June 11 in a demonstration that was largely peaceful. CGTP sources told poloff that the union had been caught off guard by Minister of Labor Pinella's quick action in meeting with Casapalca miners and by the GOP's willingness to support the miner's demands, but decided to go ahead with the march anyway. Prime Minister Jorge del Castillo told the Ambassador July 9 that he expected the CGTP would be unable to maintain the strike.

¶4. (SBU) The far-left teacher's union SUTEP (the United Syndicate of Peruvian Educational Workers) continued an indefinite strike, now in its third week, that was supported by the CGTP. SUTEP protests took place throughout Peru, and more than 3,000 teachers marched in the province of Tumbes. The teachers have received widespread condemnation in the Lima press, and most schools have continued classes without interruption. CGTP leaders told poloff they felt obliged to support a besieged union, but at the same time, they admit an internal power struggle has broken out within SUTEP, with a regional faction lead by Robert Huayanlaya -- who reportedly has ties to terrorists -- seeking a more confrontational approach with the government.

¶5. (C) In the province of Ucayali, thousands of protesters blocked access to the regional capital for four days during the week of July 2 to protest a proposal by the central government to eliminate tax breaks for jungle regions. Talks chaired by Minister of Commerce Mercedes Aaroz on July 4 were successful, and the roads and airport in the capital are open, although stragglers still roam the streets. Castillo told the Ambassador that the "Ucayali Defense Front" responsible for organizing the protest was really the local Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber turned to local communist groups to bring bodies into the street.

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Three Reasons for Protests  
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¶16. (C) Ombudsman Beatriz Merino told the Ambassador July 10 that the inability of local governments to deliver basic services combined with the razor-thin plurality that brought many to power has robbed regional officials of political legitimacy and allowed popular movements to gain ascendancy. (Comment: In the November 2006 regional elections, no president received more than 50 per cent of the popular vote; 12 won with less than 30 percent. End Comment) Merino says the pace of protests will pick up again in August when regional authorities begin debating budget priorities.

¶17. (SBU) A second explanation cites rising expectations created by Peru's economic growth as the reason for popular discontent. Political analyst Carlos Reyna says Peruvians were willing to accept privation during the fight against terrorism, but economic expansion and the fall of Fujimori has motivated regional organizations and unions to seek a larger share of wealth. Political commentator Eduard Ballon says the protests represent a fundamental challenge to the Garcia administration to show that the benefits of open markets can be distributed fairly throughout the society.

¶18. (SBU) Finally, a number of public and private leaders see the hand of Chavez behind some of the well-organized and well-coordinated demonstrations taking place. These observers note that protests cost money, and civil society organizations do not have the resources to support sustained public actions. For many in Peru, it is no accident that the volume of strikes has increased at the same time the government of Venezuela has shown increasing interest in creating ties with Peruvian radicals (see septel).

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Comment: The Good and the Bad  
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¶19. (C) In public and private, the GOP has maintained an even keel in the face of vociferous street protests, allowing demonstrations to go forward while ensuring security forces maintain law and order. The government has mobilized 15,000 police, and President Garcia announced July 10 that the government would use the military to protect key infrastructure installations. Garcia remains largely popular, though his poll numbers continue to fall, and the popularity of the Congress has plunged. The protests may, in an odd way, reflect the GOP's strength: radicals resisted pushing ex-president Toledo too hard for fear he would fall. Garcia has proven a far more formidable adversary. Post agrees with Castillo's assessment that the current protests are likely to run out of steam as the end of the month approaches.

¶10. (SBU) But the protest cycle could resume in August, and images of loud, threatening demonstrations taking place throughout Peru carry a cost. The protests have put international investors on edge, and popular mobilizations provide extremists the opportunity over time to turn local discontent into a national movement. No evidence has emerged of overall coordination or management of the protests, but the danger exists that simmering discontent could flare at any time into popular outrage. End Comment.  
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